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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to analyze some of the services offered by Illinois libraries serving populations of fewer than 2,500, particularly in terms of how they operate and which circulation services are used most frequently. A questionnaire was mailed to 192 libraries, with 131 or 68.2% returning usable responses. Among the general findings: (1) most rural libraries were part of a regional system that could provide aid to them; (2) 58% of Illinois rural libraries served populations of 1,501 or fewer; (3) 25.9% of Illinois rural libraries operate on an annual budget of less than $12,001; (4) the amount of the budget devoted to purchase and upkeep of both reference materials and library equipment varies; (5) hours of operation range from 5 to 75 hours per week, with the average being 26.1; (6) the most popular services (with the exception of the circulation of books and periodicals) were (in this order): interlibrary loan, photocopier, large print materials, videocassettes, and books on audiocassette. Results may be slightly skewed by a small concentration of libraries in a rural but wealthy standard metropolitan area, but otherwise the study demonstrates the impact of library budget on all aspects of services. A copy of the survey and cover letter are appended. (BEW)

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ED 394 528

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL LIBRARIES IN ILLINOIS

by David A. Hamilton

This study was designed to analyze a few of the services offered by rural libraries in Illinois. The Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship designates as "rural" those libraries which serve a population of fewer than 25,000.[1] The National Center for Education Statistics uses a population figure of 10,000 or fewer to determine a rural area.[2] However, the U. S. Bureau of the Census considers a population of 2,500 or fewer as a rural area,[3] and that was the figure chosen to be used in this research: libraries in Illinois serving populations of 2,500 or fewer.

There have been few survey studies made of the reference or circulation services of rural libraries in the United States. In 1981 a survey was made of the reference service of a national sampling of libraries serving populations of fewer than 25,000.[4] Included within the results of that massive national sampling was a separate analysis of a subset of "libraries within communities of 2,500 or fewer."[5] In 1984 the reference service of Iowa public libraries serving a population of fewer than 2,500 was examined,[6] and more recently, in 1993, the circulation services and other characteristics of Nebraska public libraries serving 10,000 or fewer were investigated.[7]

The purpose of the present study is to survey some of the characteristics of the operation of small public libraries in Illinois, "rural" libraries serving 2,500 or fewer, and to determine the most frequently used circulation services in those libraries.

The hypotheses of this study are as follows. First, the population served by the rural libraries of Illinois will average fewer than 2,000. Second, the majority of the budgets of these libraries will be less than $15,000. Third, the number of hours the rural libraries are open will average less than 25 hours in a week. And fourth, the five most used services, excluding the circulation of books and periodicals, will be, in this order, interlibrary loan, circulation of video

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cassettes, use of a photocopier, circulation of large print books and circulation of books on audio cassettes.

There were 621 public libraries in Illinois in 1992 (the latest data available at the time of the survey) and 198 (31.9%) of them each serve a population of fewer than 2,500.[8] This subset of 198 libraries was selected for this study on the basis of the population data in the "Public Library Annual Report" required of each library by state law[9] and published annually in Illinois Public Library Statistics.[10] In January 1994, 6 libraries were chosen out of the 198 for pretesting the questionnaire; all six replied. The questionnaire was changed in few details as a result of the pretest.

When the final survey was ready to mail, addresses for six of the 198 libraries were not in the 1993 ALA Directory.[11] As a consequence, questionnaires were mailed to 192 Illinois rural public libraries on March 10, 1994. The return date of May 15, 1994, was requested in the cover letter, and by that date 142 questionnaires had been returned. This was a gross response rate of 74.0%, therefore, a second mailing of the questionnaire did not seem necessary. Eleven of the 142 returns had to be discarded: one stated the library "contracts out" for services, ten other returns indicated those libraries now serve populations of more than 2,500 each. The return of 131 usable responses was a net rate of 68.2%, or a net rate of 66.2% on the full 198 libraries . The questionnaire is included at the end of this article.

Every responding library answered the first three questions. Question 1 was designed to find out if there are county or city library systems which are able to aid small libraries. Fifteen libraries said they were members of a city system, and two libraries said they were members of a county system. Eighteen libraries considered themselves independent. The remainder of the responding libraries, 96, said they were members of only a regional system. In actuality, only 3 libraries of the 198 are not members of a regional library system[12]. Table 1 is a recapitulation of the answers to Question 1.

Table 1
Library Affiliation

Affiliation	Number of Libraries
independent	18
a member of a regional system	96
a member of a county system	2
a member of a city system	15
Total	131

The second question asked about the size of the population served. From the information charted in Table 2 it can be pointed out that more than one-quarter of the rural libraries in Illinois, 37 or 28.2%, each serve communities of 1,000 or fewer and another 39 rural libraries (29.8%) each serve communities of between 1,001 and 1,500. In other words, more than one-half, 76 (58%), of Illinois rural libraries serve populations of fewer than 1,501 each. Only 26 (19.9%) Illinois rural libraries serve populations of between 2,001 and 2,500.

Table 2
Distribution of Libraries
by Service Population
(N = 131)

Population Served:	Number of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries	Cumulative No.of Libraries	Cumulative Percentages
to - 500	5	3.8%	5	3.8%
501 - 1000	32	24.4	37	28.2
1001 - 1500	39	29.8	76	58.0
1501 - 2000	29	22.1	105	80.1
2001 - 2500	26	19.9	131	100.0

The analysis of the replies to Question 3 (see Table 3) reveals that more than one-quarter (34 or 25.9%) of the rural libraries in Illinois operate with a budget of less than $12,001. It can also be seen in Table 3 that 51 libraries (38.9%) have budgets of less than $15,001 and 53 (40.5%) libraries have budgets of more than $20,001.

Table 3
Distribution of Libraries by
Annual Operating Budget
(N = 131)

Ranges of Budgets	No. of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries	Cumulative Total	Cumulative Percentages
to - $3,000	5	3.8%	5	3.8%
$3,001 - 6,000	8	6.1	13	9.9
6,001 - 9,000	10	7.6	23	17.5
9,001 -12,000	11	8.4	34	25.9
12,001 -15,000	18	13.0	51	38.9
15,001- 20,000	27	20.6	79	60.3
20,001 +	53	40.5	131	100.0

Intrigued by the fact that 5 libraries serve a population of fewer than 501 (Table 2) and 5 libraries report budgets of less than $3,001 (Table 3) and wondering whether the same 5 libraries are in both categories, a further exploration was made by combining the replies to Questions 2 and 3. The result is Table 4. Two of the five rural libraries serving population of fewer than 501 do report budgets of less than $3,001, but, three other rural libraries serving fewer that 501 have budgets over $12,001. In fact, Table 4 reveals some of the vast differences in Illinois rural libraries: 20 (15.3%) of the libraries serving populations of 1,000 or fewer do so on budgets ranging down from less than $15,001; 26 other Illinois rural libraries, those serving between 2,001 and 2,500, have budgets of more than $12,001 each. Moreover, about one-quarter (32, 24.4%) of all rural libraries, those serving populations of between 501 and 1,000, have budgets ranging over the budget spectrum from less than $3,000 to more than $20,000.

Table 4
Distribution of Libraries by
Population and Annual Operating Budget

	Population					
Budget	To-500	501-1,000	1,001-1,500	1,501-2,000	2,001-2,500	Totals
- $3,000	2	3	0	0	0	5
3,001-6,000	0	7	1	0	0	8
6,001-9,000	0	4	5	1	0	10
9,001-12,000	0	4	4	3	0	11
12,001-15,000	2	2	7	4	2	17
15,001-20,000	0	6	14	3	4	27
20,001 +	1	6	8	18	20	53
Totals	5	32	39	29	26	131

While Question 3 asked the approximate dollar amount of the Total Annual Operating Budget, Question 4 sought to determine what, if any, part of that budget is allowed for the purchase and upkeep of reference materials. Only 6 libraries (4.9% of those responding to this question) recorded percentage amounts devoted to reference materials in answer to the question and these amounts range from 5% to 30% or an average of 15.3%. Sixteen libraries (13.1%) replied to the question with the dollar amount of their budget for an average of $2,468.75. The median of the replies is $2,666.66. On the other hand, 100 libraries (82%) report they have no specific dollar or percentage amount of their budgets allowed for reference purchase and upkeep. Nine libraries (6.9%) did not respond to this question. See Tables 5, 6 and 7.

Table 5
Distribution of Libraries by Budget
Allowed for Reference Materials
(N = 122)

	No. of libraries	Percentage
Percentage of budget	6	4.9%
Dollar amount of budget	16	13.1
None specifically	100	82.0

Table 6
Distribution of Libraries by Percentage of
Budget Allowed for Reference Materials

Percentages	Number of Libraries
5%	1
10	2
12	1
25	1
30	1

Average = 15.3%

Table 7
Distribution of Libraries by Dollar Amounts of
Budget Allowed for Reference Materials

Amount for Reference	Number of Libraries
$500	3
900	1
1,000	2
2,000	3
3,500	1
3,600	1
3,700	1
4,000	2
4,300	1
6,000	1

Average = $2,468.75
Median = $2,666.66

All of the returned surveys but 11 (8.4%) replied to Question 5 concerning the amounts of their budgets devoted to the purchase and upkeep of equipment. Thirty one libraries report specific dollar amounts ranging from $100 to $10,000. The average is $2,008.06 while the median is $1,075.00. The median is that point at which one-half of the libraries have smaller amounts in their budgets and one-half have larger amounts in their budgets. Since very few libraries with extremely large amounts devoted to equipment have skewed the average toward the larger amounts, the median figure is considered the more reliable. Only two libraries (1.7%) gave percentage amounts of their budgets: 6% and 10% and 87 libraries (72.5%) said they have no specific dollar or percentage amount of their budgets devoted to the purchase and upkeep of equipment. Eleven libraries did not reply. See Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8
Distribution of Libraries by
Budget allowed for Equipment
(N = 120)

	Number of Libraries	Percentage
Percentage of budget	2	1.7%
Dollar amount of budget	31	25.8
None specifically	87	72.5

Table 9
Distribution of Libraries by Dollar Amounts
of Budget Allowed for Equipment

Amount of Dollars	Number of Libraries
[illegible]	[illegible]
300	3
400	1
500	5
600	1
800	1
850	1
1,000	3
1,300	1
1,500	3
2,000	3
2,700	1
4,000	1
5,000	2
5,500	1
9,000	1
10,000	1

Average = $2,008.06
Median = $1,075.00

The replies to Question 6, "Number of Hours Open Weekly," range from 5 hours to 75 hours; three libraries did not answer the question. More Illinois rural libraries are open 25 hours weekly than any other choice of hour. The average number of hours open is 26.1 while the median is 26.5. In this instance, where the average and the median are so close, this fact verifies that there are few replies at the extreme ends of the range of replies. Table 10 shows the results of the question in ranges of 5 hours.

Table 10
Distribution of Libraries by the
Number of Hours Open Weekly
(N = 128)

No. of Hours Open Weekly	No. of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries
5 - 9	4	3.1%
10 - 14	13	10.2
15 - 19	13	10.2
20 - 24	22	17.3
25 - 29.5	35	27.3
30 - 34	22	17.3
35 - 39	9	7.0
40 - 44	3	2.3
45 - 49	2	1.6
50 - 54	1	.7
55 - 59	3	2.3
75	1	.7

Average = 26.1
Median = 26.5

When the information received from Question 6 (Number of Hours Open Weekly) is combined with the information received from Question 2 (Population Served) the average of the number of hours open weekly does not exceed 25 unless the population served is more than 1,500. See Table 11.

Table 11
Distribution of Libraries by the Number of Hours
Open Weekly and the Service Population

Population	Number of Libraries	Average of Hours Open
to - 500	5	20.1
501 - 1,000	32	23.5
1,001 - 1,500	38	24.2
1,501 - 2,000	28	29.4
2,001 - 2,500	25	29.3
	128	26.2

When the information received from Question 6 (Number of Hours Open Weekly) is combined with the information received from Question 3 (Total Annual Operating Budget) the average of the number of hours open weekly does not exceed 25 unless the budget is more than $15,000. See Table 12

Table 12
Distribution of Libraries by the Number of Hours Open Weekly and the Annual Operating Budget

Annual Budget	Number of Libraries	Average of Hours Open
to - $3,000	5	13.7
$3,001 - 6,000	8	15.5
6,001 - 9,000	10	17.9
9,001 - 12,000	10	23.4
12,001 - 15,000	15	21.5
15,001 - 20,000	27	25.1
20,001 +	53	32.1
	128	26.2

When the information received from all three questions (#2: Population Served; #3: Total Annual Operating Budget; and, #6: Number of Hours Open Weekly) is combined there are increases in the average Number of Hours Open Weekly because of increases in both the population and the budget. However, the increase in Number of Hours Open Weekly is neither gradual nor steady. It is rather haphazard. See Table 13.

Table 13
Distribution of Average Hours Open of Libraries by Service Population and Annual Operating Budget

	Population				
Budget	To-500	501 - 1,000	1,001 - 1,500	1,501 - 2,000	2,000 - 2,500
To - $3,000	*	17.5			
$3,001 - 6,000		15.0	*		
6,001 - 9,000		22.0	15.7	*	
9,001 - 12,000		22.2	23.0	*	
12,001 - 15,000	*	18.3	24.6	21.3	*
15,001 - 20,000		24.3	24.5	25.7	28.1
20,001 +	*	27.7	29.7	34.1	29.9

* = too few responding libraries to obtain reliability

Question 7 asked respondents to specify from a list of 34 the kind and number of services the libraries offer to the public. Again, 128 libraries responded. Only one service, the "Day Care Center, During the Day" is not specified by any library and only one library said they are used as a "Day Care Center, After School." At the other end of the scale, more rural libraries in Illinois offer photocopier service than offer the usual Interlibrary Loan service. The average

number of services offered by Illinois rural libraries is ten. Table 14 is the list of the services from the questionnaire and by rank the number of libraries offering them.

Table 14
Distribution of Libraries by
the Library Services Offered
(N = 128)

Services	Number of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries
Photocopier	113	88.2%
ILL: Books	111	86.7
ILL: Magazines	102	79.7
Large Print books	100	78.1
Video cassettes	97	75.8
Income Tax forms	90	70.3
Audio cassettes	78	60.9
Books on cassettes	68	53.1
LP recordings	64	50.0
Fax machine	57	44.5
Materials for the blind	54	42.2
Microfilm reader	52	40.6
Audio cassette player	47	36.7
Microfilms	45	35.1
Movie projector	43	33.6
Conference rooms	39	30.5
Projector screen	36	28.1
Camera	34	26.6
VCR/player	28	21.8
Filmstrip projector	26	20.3
Art work	23	18.0
Software	17	13.3
Filmstrips	17	13.3
Slide projector	15	11.7
Books by mail	14	10.9
Movie films	13	10.1
Overhead projector	8	6.2
CD recordings	6	4.7
Opaque projector	5	3.9
Bookmobile	5	3.9
Video camera	2	1.5
Music room	2	1.5
Day care center	1	.8

In order to further analyze services offered by rural Illinois libraries a few comparisons are made with the number of services offered and some other variable factors, such as ranges of population, ranges of annual budgets and ranges of hours the libraries are open. It is not until the population figure is over 1,500 (see Table 15) and the annual operating budget figure is over $15,000 (see Table 16) that the average number of services offered is more than ten. The

number of hours open per week exceeds 24 before the average number of services offered is more than ten (see Table 17).

Table 15
Average Number of Services Offered
Related to Service Population
(N = 128)

Population Ranges	Number of Libraries	Average Number o Services Offered	fLeast and Most Number of Services
To - 500	5	8.6	4, 12
501 - 1,000	32	9.6	1, 24
1,001 - 1,500	39	8.6	2, 21
1,501 - 2,000	29	11.3	4, 19
2,001 - 2,500	26	11.8	2, 20

Table 16
Average Number of Services Offered
Related to Annual Operating Budget
(N = 128)

Operating Budget Ranges	Number of Libraires	Average Number of Services Offered	Least and Most Number of Services
to - $3,000	5	6.0	4, 10
$3,001 - 6,000	8	6.5	1, 12
6,001 - 9,000	10	7.4	4, 13
9,001 - 12,000	11	8.1	5, 14
12,001 - 15,000	18	8.9	2, 21
15,001 - 20,000	27	10.8	3,17
20,001 +	52	11.8	2, 24

Table 17
Average Number of Services Offered
Related to Hours Open Weekly
(N = 128)

Hours Open Ranges	Number of Libraries	Average Number of Services Offered	Least and Most Number of Services
5 - 9	4	7.0	3, 11
10 - 14	13	7.5	2, 13
15 - 19	13	7.2	1, 16
20 - 24	22	8.5	2, 15
25 - 29.5	35	11.3	5, 21
30 - 34	22	10.6	4, 18
35 - 39	9	11.7	2, 19
40 - 44	3	*	*
45 - 49	2	*	*
50 - 54	1	*	*
55 - 59	3	*	*
75	1	*	*

* = too few responding libraries to obtain reliability

Of the rural libraires answering Question 8, "Do you have a written policy statement for any of the above services?", 84 (76.4%) said they do have a written policy statement covering

the services listed in Question 7 and 26 (23.6%) libraries said they do not have a written policy. Twenty one (16.1%) libraries did not answer the question. See Table 18.

Table 18
Distribution of Libraries with
Written Policy Statements
(N = 110)

	Replies	Percentages
Libraries with statements	84	76.4%
Libraries without statements	26	23.6

When asked, in Question 9, to list in order the five services which are used the most in their libraries, 96 (83.4%) libraries of the 115 responding to this question say Interlibrary loan is among the services used most in their libraries. Eighty-eight library list five services, 9 libraries list 4, 8 libraries list 3, 9 libraries list 2 and one library lists only one service. Table 19 presents all the services named by respondents and indicates how many libraries offer them.

Table 19
Distribution of Library Services by the
Number of Libraries Using Them
(N = 115)

Services	Number of libraries using them	Percentages of Libraries
Interlibrary Loan	96	83.4%
Photocopier	91	79.1
Large Print Books	71	61.7
Video Cassettes	61	53.0
Books on audio cassettes	34	29.6
Fax Machine	31	26.9
Income Tax Forms	28	24.3
Microfilm	23	20.0
Conference Rooms	12	10.4
Software	5	4.3
Movie Projector	4	3.5
Art Work	2	1.7
Bookmobile	2	1.7
Camera	2	1.7
Kits	2	1.7
Video Cassette Recorder	2	1.7
Audio Cassette Player	1	.8
Filmstrips	1	.8
Literary Materials	1	.8

Table 20 ranks the ten most used circulation services in Illinois rural libraries by the positions in which they are listed in response to question 9.

Table 20
Distribution by Choice of the
Top 10 Used Library Services

Services	Choices					
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Totals
Interlibrary Loan	39	29	13	9	6	96
Photocopier	35	28	19	8	1	91
Large Print Books	10	17	16	15	13	71
Video Cassettes	18	14	17	7	5	61
Books on...cassettes	1	8	4	11	10	34
Fax Machine	2	6	10	6	7	31
Income Tax forms	0	0	4	13	11	28
Microfilm	1	2	6	9	5	23
Conference room	0	2	4	2	4	12
Software	0	0	2	2	1	5

Those services which Illinois rural library patrons have requested of their libraries are listed in reply to Question 10. The question was not answered by 68 libraries, but of those who did answer 13 (20.6%) indicated they have been asked to provide computers for their patrons. All told, twenty seven services or programs have been requested and all are shown in Table 21.

Table 21
Distribution by Choice
of Requested Services

Services	Choices			
	1st	2nd	3rd	Totals
Computer to Use	7	5	1	13
Story Hour	6	4	1	11
Video Cassettes	7	3	0	10
Fax Machine	5	3	0	8
CD Recordings	2	2	3	7
Homebound Service	3	3	0	6
Photocopier	5	0	0	5
Microfilm Reader/Printer	4	0	0	4
Summer Reading Program	1	2	1	4
Books on ... cassettes	2	2	0	4
Typewriter	2	2	0	4
Video Camera	2	2	0	4
Software	2	1	0	3
Laminating Machine	2	0	0	2

(Table 21 continued)

(One each of the following, arranged alphabetically: Book Discussion Group; Book Sales; Bus Trips to Cultural Events; Census on Microfilm; Day Care Center; Geneology Collection; Grief Support Group; Income Tax forms; Large Print Books; Mail Order Catalogs; Newspapers; Notary Public; Voter Registration.)

When asked, in Question 11, to list those services or programs the library has discontinued, 46 libraries listed 18 different services or programs. Lack of interest is the primary reason given for the discontinuance although several librarians wrote in the comments section of the questionnaire that some programs and services have been dropped because of budget constraints. The discontinued services and programs are displayed in Table 22.

Table 22
Distribution of Discontinued
Services or Programs

Service or Program	Number of Libraries
Story Hour Programs	15
LP Recordings Collection	6
Video Hour Programs	3
"Rotating" Recordings Collection	3
Video Cassettes	3
Computer Software	2
Movies on Film	2

(One each of the following arranged alphabetically: Art work; Branch library service; Filmstrips; GED classes; Homebound service; Large Print Books; Photocopier; Recorded books; Renewing books by phone; Saturday evening hours; Service to the unannexed.)

One hundred libraries answered question 12, "Approximate average number of patrons per month." The average number for all 100 libraries is 592.7 patrons per month with the lowest number of patrons at 20 per month and the highest number of patrons at 8,600 per month. The median is 344.5 patrons per month. Table 23 is a recapitulation of the information from this question in ranges of 300 patrons.

Table 23
Distribution of Libraries by the
Average Number of Patrons Per Month

Number of Patrons	Number of Libraries
to 299	45
300 - 599	30
600 - 899	8
900 - 1199	9
1200 - 1499	1
1500 - 1799	3
1800 - 2099	0
2100 - 2399	0
2400 +	3
	100

The average number of patrons when related to the Service Population ranges shows an odd mix of averages: an almost idential number of responding libraries in the three middle ranges but the average number of patrons per month varies greatly. See Table 24.

Table 24
Average Number of Patrons Per Month
Related to Service Population

Population Ranges	Number of Libraries	Average Number of Patrons Per Month
to 500	5	431.8
501 - 1,000	26	549.6
1,001 - 1,500	25	335.7
1,501 - 2,000	24	969.6
2,001 - 2,500	20	557.8

The Average Number of Patrons per Month when related to Annual Operating Budget ranges indicates an increase of almost three times in the number of patrons when the budget exceeds $20,000. The libraries with lesser budgets have averages of fewer than 400 patrons per month. See Table 25.

Table 25
Average Number of Patrons Per Month
Related to Annual Operating Budget

Budget Ranges	Number of Libraries	Average Number of Patrons Per Month
to $3,000	5	81.3
$3,001 - 6,000	6	114.8
6,001 - 9,000	6	289.2
9,001 - 12,000	8	243.7
12,001 - 15,000	12	305.6
15,001 - 20,000	21	363.7
20,001 +	42	1,028.1

The Average Number of Patrons per Month when related to Number of Hours Open Weekly shows an even rate of increase from an average of 129.7 patrons for the fewest hours (5 to 9 Open Hours) to an average of 1,101.7 patrons for the 35 to 39 Open Hours range. There are so few rural libraries in each of the ranges over 39 hours that those statistics are not considered reliable. See Table 26.

Table 26
Average Number of Patrons Per Month
Related to Hours Open Weekly

Hours Open Per Week	Number of Libraries	Average Number of Patrons per Month
5 - 9 hours	4	129.7
10 - 14	11	154.8
15 - 19	10	219.0
20 - 24	15	310.9
25 - 29.5	27	469.5
30 - 34	15	571.8
35 - 39	6	1,101.7
40 - 44	3	3,053.4
45 - 49	2	*
50 - 54	1	*
55 - 59	2	*
75	1	*

* = too few responding libraries to obtain reliability

Question 13 asked for the average circulation of books, periodicals, equipment and audiovisual materials. The book circulation section of this question was answered by 108 libraries (82.4%) with monthly book circulation figures ranging from 41 per month to 6,344 per month: the overall average is 856.0 books per month; the median is 761 books per month. When the book circulation replies are related to the Service Population ranges it is not until the population is more than 1,500 that the book circulation average nears the median figure. See

Table 27. When the book circulation replies are related to the Annual Operating Budget ranges the annual budget amount is more than $15,000 before the book circulation average nears the median. See Table 28.

Table 27
Average Circulation of Books
Related to the Service Population
(N = 108)

Population Ranges	Number of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries	Average Circulation of Books Per Month
to 500	5	4.6	533.2
501 - 1,000	28	25.9	708.2
1,001 - 1,500	27	25.0	746.9
1,501 - 2,000	26	24.1	1,045.0
2,001 - 2,500	22	20.4	1,028.0

Table 28
Average Circulation of Books Related
to the Annual Operating Budget
(N = 108)

Operating Budget	Number of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries	Average Circulation of Books Per Month
to $3,000	5	4.6	133.2
$3,001 - 6,000	5	4.6	150.0
6,001 - 9,000	7	6.5	511.0
9,001 - 12,000	9	8.4	619.4
12,001 - 15,000	15	13.9	739.6
15,001 - 20,000	24	22.2	850.2
20,001 +	43	39.8	1,171.6

The average monthly circulation of periodicals was answered by 109 libraries (83.2%). Thirteen libraries (11.9%) do not circulate periodicals and the 96 libraries (88.1%) which do have average periodical circulation figures ranging from 2 per month to 1,000 per month. The overall average is 125.6 periodicals per month and the median is 92.5 periodicals per month. The average periodical circulations related to Service Population ranges are presented in Table 29 and related to Annual Operating Budgets ranges are presented in Table 30.

Table 29
Average Circulation of Periodicals
Related to Service Population
(N = 96)

Population Ranges	Number of Libaries	Percentage of Libraries	Average Circulation of Periodicals
to 500	4	4.0%	36.0
501 - 1,000	23	24.0	123.6
1,001 - 1,500	23	24.0	102.5
1,501 - 2,000	24	25.0	156.0
2,001 - 2,500	22	23.0	133.8

Table 30
Average Circulation of Periodicals
Related to Annual Operating Budget
(N = 96)

Operating Budget Ranges	Number of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries	Average Circulation of Periodicals
to $3,000	3	3.1%	29.7
$3,001 - 6,000	3	3.1	24.3
6,001 - 9,000	5	5.2	95.0
9,001 - 12,000	5	5.2	53.0
12,001 - 15,000	15	15.6	69.9
15,001 - 20,000	23	24.0	162.3
20,001 +	42	43.8	151.6

Only 29 libraries (22.1%) answered the equipment circulation section of Question 13 and the average is 35.2 items of equipment circulate each month. The median is 5.0 items of equipment. Several libraries admitted an average of only 1 item of equipment going out each month while one library said they circulate an average 820 items of equipment each month. Tables 31 and 32 present the average equipment circulation related to Service Population ranges and Annual Operating Budget ranges respectively.

Table 31
Average Circulation of Equipment
Related to Service Population
(N = 29)

Population Ranges	Number of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries	Average Circulations of Equipment
To 500	2	6.9%	*
501 - 1,000	7	24.1	120.0
1,001 - 1,500	7	24.1	5.0
1,501 - 2,000	5	17.3	8.8
2,001 - 2,500	8	27.6	3.7

* = too few responding libraries to obtain reliability

Table 32
Average Circulation of Equipment
Related to Annual Operating Budget
(N = 29)

Operating Budget Ranges	Number of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries	Average Circulations of Equipment
to $3,000	1	3.4%	*
$3,001 - 6,000	1	3.4	*
6,001 - 9,000	0	---	*
9,001 - 12,000	2	6.9	*
12,001 - 15,000	4	13.8	16.3
15,001 - 20,000	9	31.1	5.4
20,001 +	12	41.4	74.1

* = too few responding libraries to obtain reliability

The audiovisual section of Question 13, asking for average monthly circulation figures, brought replies from 86 libraries (65.6%). The overall average is 142.3 items of audiovisual material which includes both audio cassettes and videocassettes. The median is 48.0 items per month with the lowest figure of 2 libraries having an average of 1 item circulating each month and the highest figure of one library having an average of 1,311 items circulating each month. Tables 33 and 34 present the average audiovisual material circulations related to Service Population ranges and Annual Operating Budgets ranges respectively. The averages turn out to be as erratic as the averages are for equipment circulations.

Table 33
Average Circulation of Audiovisual Material
Related to Service Population
(N = 86)

Population Ranges	Number of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries	Average Circulations of Audiovisual
to 500	4	4.6%	247.5
501 - 1,000	22	25.6	123.5
1,001 - 1,500	19	22.1	65.8
1,501 - 2,000	19	22.1	236.8
2,000 - 2,500	22	25.6	126.3

Table 34
Average Circulation of Audiovisual Material
Related to Annual Operating Budget
(N = 86)

Operating Budget Ranges	Number of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries	Average Circulations of Audiovisual
to $3,000	4	4.6%	6.8
$3,001 - 6,000	3	3.5	16.0
6,001 - 9,000	4	4.6	94.5
9,001 - 12,000	3	3.5	40.3
12,001 - 15,000	9	10.5	90.8
15,000 - 20,000	20	23.3	59.4
20,001 +	43	50.0	224.6

The final question soliciting information in the survey, Question 14, asked for the distance in miles to the nearest city over 25,000 population. One hundred twenty eight libraries responded to this question and the average distance is 30.8 miles from such a city. The median distance is 25 miles. The farthest city is 150 miles away and the nearest is 1.5 miles away. Table 35 displays the distribution of libraries in distance ranges of 10 miles.

Table 35
.Distribution of Libraries by
Distance to City over 25,000 Population
(N = 128)

Ranges of Distances	Number of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries
to 9	7	5.5
10 to 19	26	20.3
20 to 29	34	26.6
30 to 39	23	18.0
40 to 49	13	10.1
50 to 59	17	13.3
60 to 69	3	2.3
70 to 79	2	1.6
80 +	3	2.3

The question of distrance to a city over 25,000 population was asked to determine if distance to a much larger community has influence on the number of Hours Open Weekly in the small rural library. Three of the libraries answering Question 14 had not answered Question 6 on the number of Hours Open Weekly. Therefore, the number of libraries to be related by Hours Open and miles of distance are 125. Table 36 indicates very little correlation between the Hours Open Weekly and the distance to a city over 25,000 population.

Table 36
Average Distance to City Over 25,000
Related to Hours Open Weekly
(N = 125)

Hours Open Weekly	Number of Libraries	Percentages of Libraries	Average Distance to City
5 - 9	4	3.2	36.3
10 - 14	12	9.6	30.7
15 - 19	11	8.8	36.6
20 - 24	22	17.6	32.6
25 - 29.5	35	28.0	27.5
30 - 34	22	17.6	28.7
35 - 39	9	7.2	44.0
40 - 44	3	2.4	*
45 - 49	2	1.6	*
50 - 54	1	.8	*
55 - 59	3	2.4	*
75	1	.8	*

* = too few responding libraries to obtain reliability

Conclusions

It is assumed the findings of this survey, based on data produced from 66.2% of the Illinois libraries serving fewer than 2,500, are representative of Illinois small rural libraries and define a few important characteristics of those libraries. It is not assumed the findings of this survey answer all of the questions related to Illinois small rural libraries. The data are intended as the first action in an effort to gather information and attempt to describe some of the characteristics of Illinois small rural libraries that makes those libraries have different needs and requirements.

Of the characteristics summarized in the hypotheses set out at the beginning of this study only the first two were correct: one, populations served by Illinois small rural libraries average fewer than 2,000 people, and two, the average Illinois small rural library serves its population with an annual operating budget of less than $15,000. A portion of that budget, but generally no specific amount, is for reference material and upkeep of that material. The average Illinois small rural library is open 25 hours a week, hypothesis three was for less than 25 hours per week, but provides only ten of the most popular library services. The five most popular library services in order of their popularity are interlibrary loan, photocopier, large print books

video cassettes and books on audio cassettes. The fourth hypothesis had these five services in a somewhat different order. Other characteristics brought out by this survey are that the patrons of the average Illinois small rural library number fewer than 350 per month and have asked their library for more services including computer software and return of the discontinued story hour.

Of course, other statistics for all of the 198 small rural libraries in Illinois can be gained from the information available in the annual publication Illinois Public Library Statistics : A guide for Librarians and Trustees[13]. For instance, the average Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV), in 1992, for all libraries in Illinois was $175,609,000[14]. The average EAV, in 1992, of the 198 Illinois small rural libraries in the original universe of this study was $12,786,563.92[15], only 7.3% of the average for all libraries in the state. The EAV "is the figure of real property"[16] upon which the local tax is based that provides, on average, 87% of the income for libraries in Illinois.[17] The average total income, which includes income from the taxes on the EAV and from the state and federal governments, for all Illinois libraries in 1992 was $785,996,000.[18] The average total income of the 198 Illinois small rural libraries was $33,939,000[19], or only 4.3% of the average of all Illinois libraries.

A problem embedded in this study is that several of the 198 small libraries are located within a Standard Metropolitan Area (SMA), and the EAVs of these libraries are extremely high. The tax base of an SMA includes industries which produce more taxes without adding additional library patrons. In retrospect, there should have been a restriction to limit this study to those libraries which serve fewer than 2,500 and are outside of a Standard Metropolitan Area. The information supplied by the several libraries within the SMAs has skewed some of the statistics but also has shown that libraries with smaller service areas but with larger budgets have more services to offer and consequently have more patrons generating more requests for more services.

The principal element which consistently affects the characteristics of small rural libraries revealed by this and the other studies mentioned earlier is the library income. As one of the other researchers has said. "The perpetual cause and effect constraints of a limited

population base and limited financial resources were profoundly expressed or implied in the responses to nearly every question."[20] Apparently, the vast discrepancy in EAV and income between the average Illinois library and the average Illinois small library is what prompted some of the following comments appended to the survey.

> I sometimes wonder if people at the State Library and other larger libraries have any idea how small rural libraries are run and what size of budgets we have to work with?...some of the membership requirements and criteria are a little beyond the reach of some of the small libraries.
>
> . . . reference materials must take a back seat to popular books and videos. . . .The cuts made by the system have hurt us more then [they have hurt] the larger libraries because the big cut was to reference searching [by the system office staff] which we had relied on. Now we have to play catch up for neglecting our own reference collection for many years and relying on the system.
>
> We definitely have different needs! We cannot afford the high-tech stuff the state requires but just the need for the books (especially children summer reading program) is so great--just the basics needed to stay open at all!
>
> The bureaucrats are killing the small libraries....The small town libraries do not need all the facilities of a large city library. Automation is expensive and unnecessary in a library of this size. Small libraries are being pushed around....We're being forced to meet demands that are relevant only to large libraries. .... We are concerned about the future.
>
> We are concerned for the future but neither the state nor the paper shufflers at the system care about us. They want us all to be alike and if we cannot supply what the big boys can (even if it has never been asked for) then we must not be doing our job.
>
> Won't the State Library understand that patrons don't use reference materials in a small library? What they want is fiction and occasional popular information

The findings of this survey are that the small rural library in Illinois is hanging on but just barely. The small rural library in Illinois has limited income for a shrinking budget and provides the services that tiny budget can provide in spite of state and federal requirements to offer more and more services. When will it end?

Two of the harrassed and eloquent librarians expressed it very well for the rest of us. One said, "I believe a small rural library is a reader's library as long as taxpayers are willing to

pay for that privilege." The other librarian, stating what those who serve in small libraries in Illinois truly believe, said, "Rural libraries are important to the backbone of America."

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[1] Cox, Jamie Suzane. "Services offered in rural libraries in Nebraska," Rural Libraries, v.13, no.1, p.13.
[2] U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. Digest of education statistics, 1979, p.199.
[3] U.S. Bureau of the Census. Statistical abstract of the United States, 1994. p.4
[4] Vavrek, Bernard. Reference service in rural public libraries. Clarion, PA : Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, 1982.
[5] Vavrek, p.3.
[6] Eckert, Sharon Stine, The pluralism of rural : a survey of reference service in Iowa public libraries serving a population of less than 2500. Urbana-Champaign, IL : University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
[7] Cox.
[8] University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Library Research Center prepared for the Illinois State Library. Illinois public library statistics: a guide for librarians and trustees, 1991-1992, pp.64-69. (Hereinafter cited as Illinois public library statistics.)
[9] Illinois Library Association. Illinois Library Laws, *75 ILCS 5/4-10.*
[10] Illinois public library statistics.11.
[11] American Library Association. The American Library Association directory, 1993. pp. 433-543.
[12] Illinois public library statistics, p. 56.
[13] Ibid., pp.64-69.
[14] Ibid., p.57.
[15] Ibid., pp.86-131.
[16] Ibid., p.145.
[17] Ibid., p.5.
[18] Ibid.,, p.57.
[19] Ibid., pp.26-49
[20] Eckert, p.66.

March 10, 1994

Dear Librarian:

The enclosed survey should not take more than five minutes of your time.

This survey is being sent to libraries in Illinois serving fewer than 2,500. I wish to discover what kind of equipment we have in the small rural libraries to assist our patrons. Recently, we have been given or have purchased computers. What else do we have available? Can the results of this survey describe some of the circumstances in which small rural libraries exist and endure?

The information you provide will be recorded anonymously; the symbol on the first page is a random code. This random code program will also produce an envelope to return the results to you, if you request them.

Please return the survey on or before May 15, 1994. A stamped, self-addressed envelope is provided for your use.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter,

David A.. Hamilton
Director, Maple Park Public Library

Rural Library Survey
Ver.2.2

LIBRARY SERVICES QUESTIONNAIRE

Please place a check by the correct answer.

1. Is your library:
   - ____ a. independent
   - ____ b. a member of a regional system
   - ____ c. a member of a county system
   - ____ d. a member of a city system

2. Population served:
   - ____ a. 0 - 500
   - ____ b. 501 - 1,000
   - ____ c. 1,001 - 1,500
   - ____ d. 1,501 - 2,000
   - ____ e. 2,001 - 2,500
   - ____ f. Over 2,500

3. Total annual operating budget:
   - ____ a. $ - $3,000
   - ____ b. $3,001 - $6,000
   - ____ c. $6,001 - $9,000
   - ____ d. $9,001 - $12,000
   - ____ e. $12,001 - $15,000
   - ____ f. $15,001 - $20,000
   - ____ g. $20,001 and over

4. Amount of budget allowed for purchase and upkeep of reference materials:
   - _____ a. (Percentage amount of budget)
   - or _____ b. (Dollar amount of budget)
   - or ____ c. None specifically

5. Amount of budget allowed for purchase and upkeep of equipment:
   - _____ a. (Percentage amount of budget)
   - or _____ b. (Dollar amount of budget)
   - or ____ c. None specifically

6. Number of hours open weekly _____

7. Please place a check by the services you offer to the public:
   - _____ Photocopier
   - _____ Audio cassette player
   - _____ Audio cassettes
   - _____ Books on audio cassettes
   - _____ Books by mail
   - _____ Filmstrips
   - _____ Filmstrip projector
   - _____ Movie films
   - _____ Fax machine
   - _____ Video camera
   - _____ Video cassettes
   - _____ Video cassette recorder/ player
   - _____ Recordings (What kind?)
   - _____ CDs
   - _____ LPs, etc.

(More on page over, please

_____ Movie projector
_____ Opaque projector
_____ Overhead projector
_____ Projector screen
_____ Slide projector
_____ Conference room(s)
_____ Music room(s)

_____ Large print books
_____ Materials for the blind
_____ Bookmobile

_____ Microfilm reader
_____ Microfilms
_____ Software
_____ Camera
_____ Income tax forms
_____ Art work
_____ Day care center
(When?)
_____ During the day
_____ After school
_____ Interlibrary loan (one or both?)
_____ Books
_____ Magazines and/or articles

8. Do you have a written policy statement for any of the above services:
_____ Yes
_____ No

9. Please list in order, from the greatest to the least, the five services from the above list which you consider to be used the most:
a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
d. _____
e. _____

10. Are there other services your patrons have requested you to provide? If so, list any such services:
a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

11. What other services or programs, if any, has your library had, but discontinued? And if you care to give the reason, why were they discontinued?
_____
_____
_____
_____

12. Approximate averaged number of patrons per month: _____

13.. Approximate averaged monthly circulation:
Books _____
Periodicals _____
Equipment _____
Audiovisual materials (include video and audio cassettes) _____

14. How many miles to the closest city of over 25,000 population?

_____

15. Do you wish to see a copy of the results before publication?

____ a. Yes
____ b. I could care less and I don't have time, dummy! ! !

If you do have time, I would appreciate any comments you might care to make about reference service in a very small rural library, such as yours. I intend, if response to this survey is usable, to try to publish the results but also I am thinking of using the same survey in other Midwest states, such as Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, etc. I believe rural libraries here are different from others. Care to comment on that thought, too? Thank you very much for your help. dh